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ABSTRACT

Numerous misuses of statistics are described and illustrated, and ways of recognizing and avoiding such misuse are discussed. The following five categories of statistical misuse are identified: a lack of knowledge of the subject matter, the quality of the basic data, the preparation of the study and the report, the statistical methodology, and a deliberate suppression of data. Topics addressed include non-statistical knowledge concerning the subjects of statistical analysis, definitional issues, basic data quality, graphics and presentation, methodology, faulty interpretation, data acquisition and analysis for surveys and polls, affirmative action and discrimination, use of the simplest appropriate procedures available, uses of estimates and sources, and governmental uses of statistics. A brief explanation of the concept of life tables is appended. (TJH)

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